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Revised Draft
9 December 1959

UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

SUBJECT: Proposal for a Limited USIB Codeword Control
Mechanism

1. Preamble

CIA proposes that an orderly means be developed for clearing and allocating selected codewords* throughout the intelligence community in order to avoid the confusion which could result at an interagency level from the existence of multiple definitions. This is not a problem of major proportions. On the other hand, it appears to be an area in which an attempt can be made to improve community coordination substantially and thus reduce the risk of confusion with a minimum of effort, principally by redirecting existing staff activities within the separate Board agencies. Particularly in the light of the closeness of the intelligence community, the same logic which in the past called for the establishment of a single control point for codewords within

*A "codeword" for purposes of this memorandum means a word which is assigned a classified meaning by the proper authority to insure maximum security concerning intentions and to safeguard information pertaining to plans or operations classified as Confidential or higher.

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certain departments and agencies now suggests the establishment of some control at the Intelligence Board level.

2. Background

a. Most USIB agencies have a set of codewords the definitions of which understandably are held very closely within the respective agencies.

b. There appears to be little or no interagency liaison within the community on this matter except within the Department of Defense where the Secretary, Intelligence Directorate, The Joint Staff, administers a codeword list (JANAP 299) for the Army, Navy, Air Force and Joint Staff.

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within the US Government there is no over-all mechanism for preventing assignment of different meanings to certain codewords, even solely within the intelligence community.

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c. In the course of clearing a proposed new codeword

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Secretariat encountered general feelings among the Intelligence Board contacts that a central mechanism was certainly desirable if not actually necessary.

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a. Quite apart from the convenience of having a mechanism to clear codewords for community efforts [REDACTED] there exists, in the absence of a community-wide check, a risk of confusion at the interagency or high policy level which could result from the common handling of or contact with certain codewords which have been assigned different meanings by the separate agencies.

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f. The degree of potential risk is very difficult to assess, as are the consequences of any confusion; however, the problem probably would assume its most serious proportions in crisis situations in which there is little time to unravel confusion. Similarly, the precise level of usage of such a control mechanism is difficult to determine in advance.

3. Possible Community Mechanism

a. General Coverage. As a practical matter, appropriate coordination and control can be established by agreeing that those codewords which relate to activities within the purview of the United States Intelligence Board and which might have common handling or usage among more than one USIB agency shall be obtained from the approved USIB codeword list. It would require advanced clearance and central allocation only for those codewords used by the Intelligence Board and USIB Committees or working groups or for those codewords whose particular usage could lead to interagency confusion in the event that multiple definitions exist for the codeword. In other words, the mechanism would not necessitate advanced community-wide clearance for all codewords adopted by USIB agencies for their own internal use. Moreover, when such common handling or usage

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involves only two or more USIB agencies all of whom are within the Department of Defense and governed by the JANAP 299 codeword list or its successor lists, those agencies shall continue to utilize the DOD Codeword list.

b. Administration. Each USIB member would designate a codeword control officer to administer USIB codewords within the intelligence areas for which his principal is responsible and to obtain, when appropriate, clearance from non-intelligence components of his department or agency. This proposal would not seem to demand new staffing requirements or additional personnel within agencies primarily concerned with this problem. Essentially the proposal would establish regular channels within each agency and within the intelligence community by redirection of existing staff efforts. *

c. For purposes of coordination, the Chairman of USIB would designate a USIB Codeword Control Officer who would: (1) clear codewords in the community and coordinate the USIB Codeword List with other codeword lists such as JANAP 299, and (2) administer the

* It is anticipated that the USIB members within the Department of Defense who are governed by regulations relating to JANAP 299 could simply designate the same personnel to administer both lists. The personnel would continue to utilize JANAP 299 codewords except in those cases falling within the scope of paragraph 3. a., above.

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central allocation of codewords or blocks of codewords to the USIB subcommittees and the separate USIB agencies as appropriate. The primary responsibility of the USIB codeword control officer would be to prevent the occurrence of conflicting definitions for codewords.

d. The USIB Codeword List. This list, constituting only a portion of the total number of codewords in use in the community, would include: (1) the agreed community codewords now in use such as those used for community activities [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] (2) a reserve list of several hundred words to be cleared and maintained by the USIB codeword control officer for subsequent allocation to USIB agencies or committees, and (3) any additional codewords which the separate agencies and departments may wish to add in an annex in order to pre-empt their use. The codeword list at a minimum could involve a system for recording data such as the codeword, the sponsoring USIB committee, agency or agencies, the activation date and the de-activation date. There would, of course, be no requirement for disclosure or listing of the meanings of codewords used except for those words having agreed community-wide definitions.

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4. Recommendations

a. That the Intelligence Board agree in principle to advanced community-wide clearance for selected codewords, and to central allocation of these codewords when appropriate.

b. That each Intelligence Board member designate a codeword control officer for his agency and communicate this nomination to the Intelligence Board Secretariat.

c. That the USIB Codeword Control Officer to be designated by the Chairman proceed, as soon as practicable, to develop a mechanism along the lines indicated in paragraph 3 above to coordinate the USIB Codeword List with other relevant codeword lists, and to take appropriate steps to prevent or discourage the use of words on the USIB Codeword List by non-USIB departments and agencies.

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